

DROUGHT MONTHLY BULLETIN, AUGUST 2008

Mwingi district



Warning stages

Livelihood Zone	Warning stage	Trend
Agro pastoral zone	Tending to Alarm	Worsening
Mixed farming zone	Tending to Alarm	Worsening
District		Worsening

Timeline activities

Jan Feb March April May June July Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Land preparation, planting
Lambing and kidding

Long rain cereal/legume harvests
coldest month is July.

Land preparation, planting
Kidding/lambing

Situation Overview

- No rains were received during the month and the weather was characterised by cloudy, windy and cold during the month.
- Livestock body condition was fair.
- Quantity and quality of natural vegetation was poor.

- Access and availability of water was fair but the average walking distances to water points increased to 10-15 km.
- Congestion at water points by both livestock and humans was evident. The worst hit areas were Nguni, Ngomeni, Kyuso and Tseikuru divisions, where water sources were limited and people were fighting over it.
- Milk production declined significantly over the last one month. The number of households producing milk declined by at least 30 per cent over the last one month.
- The percentage of children at risk of malnutrition remained stable at 8 per cent for the last four months.
- Conflicts over water and water resources along Tana River border were reported and most members of the Kamba community had to move out due to rising tension.
- Food security in the district worsened and the number of households borrowing food from friends and relatives increased. There were limited alternative incomes in the region such as casual labour and charcoal burning.

1 Environmental indicators

1.1 Rainfall

- There were no rains during the month. The weather was cold and cloudy in the morning and windy at night.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- The quality of natural vegetation was poor as most had dried up. Trees shed leaves, which were being fed on by termites.
- The quantity of natural vegetation was poor compared to the previous month.

- Livestock was fed on fallen leaves and travelled long distances in search of pasture.
- There was congestion of livestock inland due to tension between the pastoralists and the Kamba community along the Tana River border.

1.3 Water sources and availability

- Access to water and availability was fair but the average walking distance to the sources was rising.
- Congestion at water points by both livestock and humans was evident. The worst hit areas were Nguni, Ngomeni, Kyuso and Tseikuru divisions, where water sources were limited and people were fighting over it.

1.4 Emerging issues

1.4.1 Food scarcity

- Food scarcity was evident across many households. Majority of households depended on purchased food, which was very expensive and unaffordable for many households.
- There was some tension along Tana River boundary in Ngomeni division between pastoralists and the local community.
- This was due to drought, which resulted in scarcity of water and pasture.

1.4.2 Implications on food security

- The drought situation worsened over the month. The situation was moving from alert to alarm.
- The livestock sector was negatively affected by continued decline of water and pasture. The livestock also moved long distances to water points.

2. Rural indicators (food availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition

- Livestock body condition was fair although the outlook for the next few weeks may be bad due to deteriorating pasture and water situation.

2.1.2 Livestock diseases

- There was no major livestock disease outbreak in the district. Suspected cases of Newcastle disease in poultry were reported in Kyuso and Ngomeni divisions.

2.1.2 Milk production

- Milk production declined significantly over the last one month. The number of households producing milk declined by at least 30 per cent over the last one month.

2.2 Crop production

2.2.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities

- Some households started preparing their farms for the short rains, which normally start in October late.

2.2.2 Pests and diseases

- There being no crops in the farms, there were no cases of crop pests or diseases.

2.2.3 Implications on food security

- Due to deteriorating quantity of pasture and water availability, livestock productivity was affected negatively.
- Milk production decreased significantly over the last one month by at least 30 per cent. Though the milk was being utilized by children and, therefore, assisted in checking malnutrition, the decline in production affected food security negatively.
- Livestock body condition was likely to get worse if the drought persists, leading to reduction of household livestock prices.

3.0 Access to food

3.1 Cattle prices

- Average household cattle prices increased slightly from Ksh14,893 last month to Ksh15,055.
- Cattle prices rose slightly to Ksh 15, 055 from Ksh 14, 893 in July.
- The highest prices were recorded in Kyuso division at Ksh 20,000, while the lowest prices were recorded in Migwani division at Ksh 6,000 (small cow).

- The slight price increase could be due to reduced cattle supplies in the market.
- If the drought persists, the body condition might worsen and therefore causing a reduction in cattle prices.

3.2 Goat prices

- Average household goat prices decreased from Ksh 1,551 last month to Ksh 1,389.
- The highest prices were recorded in Kyuso division at Ksh1,613 while the lowest prices were in Mumoni division at Ksh 1,000.
- The decline could be due to reduced body condition, which attracted low prices.
- There were also large numbers of goats in the market as farmers sold them to obtain some cash to purchase foodstuffs.

3.3 Milk consumption

- The average household milk consumption declined to less than a bottle per household.

- This was due to reduced milk production due to the ongoing drought. Milk production declined by at least 30 per cent in terms of volume over the last one month.
- This was likely to negatively affect nutritional status of household members negatively.

3.4 Crop prices

3.4.1 Maize prices

- Average maize prices rose from Ksh 25 per month to Ksh 29. This could be due to high demand for maize as most households rely on purchased maize. The high prices are making the commodity to be unaffordable to most households leading to reduced number of meals per day.

3.4.2 Posho prices

- The average posho prices rose from Ksh 30 per kilo in July to Ksh 34. This could be attributed to the rising cost of maize and fuel for milling. At this price level, majority of households found it difficult to afford posho.

3.4.3 Rice prices

- The average price of rice increased slightly from Ksh 70 per kilo in July to Ksh 72.
- Majority of households stopped purchasing rice due to the high cost although it was one of the foodstuffs preferred in the community.

3.4.4 Beans prices

- The average household beans prices increased from Ksh 63 per kilo in July to Ksh 68 per kilo. This could be due to limited supplies in the market. This made the commodity unaffordable.

3.5 Income

3.5.1 Crop income

- The proportion of households selling crops was about 6 per cent. This was an indication that there were very little food stocks within households.

3.5.2 Livestock income

- The proportion of households selling livestock decreased slightly from 8 per cent in July to 7 per cent. This could be attributed to low livestock prices.

3.5.3 Other sources of income

- Casual labour was the main source of income, with 35 per cent of households being involved.
- The income obtained assisted households to purchase food from the local markets.
- Remittances also played an important role in sustaining households, with at least 14 per cent of households reporting received remittances.
- Other sources of income were charcoal burning and petty trade.

3.6 Cereal :Meat price ratio

- The terms of trade on cereal to meat ratio increased from 49 per cent in July to 68 per cent.
- This could be due to increase in cereal prices compared to meat products. Farmers had to spend more livestock products to obtain the same amount of cereals compared to last month.

4 Welfare (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status

- The percentage of children at risk of malnutrition remained stable at 8 per cent for the last four months.
- However, Migwani division had the highest rate at 15 per cent, followed by Tseikuru division at 11 per cent.
- A 31 per cent rate was reported in Thaana Nzau sub-location, which could be attributed to food scarcity within households.

4.2 Human Health

- No human disease outbreaks were reported in the district.

5.0 Current interventions

5.1 Non-food interventions

- German Agro Action (an NGO) intends to construct twenty sub surface dams with access wells and undertake roof catchment for nine schools in the district.

5.2 Food aid

- Food for asset distribution was ongoing in Nuu, Teikuru, Ngomeni, Kyuso, Nguni, and Mumoni divisions.

6.0 Recommendations

- Security surveillance should be enhanced along the Tana River border due to heightening tension between pastoralists and the local communities.
- Vulnerable farmers should be assisted with seeds in preparation for the short rains season since most households consumed the seeds reserved for the season.
- Need for campaigns to promote traditional drought-resistant crops and their utilisation to reduce over reliance on maize, which doesn't do well in the district.
- Food aid for vulnerable households should be extended to cover more households since the next harvest is not expected until February next year.

- Children in Kyangungi/Thaana should be provided with food supplements since the percentage of malnourished children is quite high.
- Campaigns for early planting should be enhanced by all the stakeholders.